**Electronic Portfolio Pilot Project**
**Report to the Budget Section**
**September 20, 2012**
**Beth Zander**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Budget Section, I am Beth Zander, Director of the Workforce Development Division of the North Dakota Department of Commerce. I'm here today to report on the electronic portfolio pilot program.

You may recall that the legislation describes pilot project goals, such as enabling users to showcase education and skills, and allowing employers and economic developers to conduct online searches to determine workforce potential by geographic region, skill, education, and experience. The pilot project committee determined that the product available from Avenet Web Solutions LLC would best suit the project.

We worked with Avenet to identify features that existed in its standard product, MyeFolio.com, and those needing development. We determined that we would implement the pilot through purchase of licenses and administrative tools, creation of a state portal for user access, development of a document creation functionality desired by our users, and a work-around on the search function. We understood that we would be able to piggyback onto the labor exchange system used by Job Service North Dakota for the search function, because that capability does not exist in MyeFolio.com. However, the vendor of the Job Service product disallowed the connection of individual folios with job seekers' records, so our work-around plan was unsuccessful. The folks at Avenet are aware of our interest in a search function in a potential statewide system. They have been in conversations with other entities as well, such as the American Association of Medical Colleges, whose interest in the search capability creates an opportunity to leverage development costs in the future.

MyeFolio.com was developed through a public/private partnership with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU), the University of Minnesota, and Avenet LLC for student portfolios, instructor assessment of coursework and post secondary institutional accreditation. Prior to this pilot, North Dakota's access to MyeFolio.com was limited to students enrolled in post-secondary institutions that partnered with MnSCU. So, we purchased development of a portal by which our nonstudent job seeker population could access the system. The portal also serves to flag our pilot population as North Dakota users, so we can track aggregate data such as occupational skills and interests.

Students at Valley City State University and North Dakota State College of Science have been creating portfolios under the pilot since last school year, and we continue to bring students on board. We've learned that students in certain programs of study at North Dakota State University also use the product, as does the University of Mary.

We are recruiting a pool of nonstudent job seekers to develop eFolios. The job seekers are recruited based on their occupational interests and skills, so we can provide their folios to employers with related occupational needs. Employers are being asked to assess the value and ease of use of the system. They are also being asked to provide specific feedback to the job seekers themselves, so they can improve their portfolios.

We ask job seekers to complete a questionnaire that we added to the eFolio system so that we can run reports on demographic information such as education, occupational interest, and area of residence. We also ask them to respond to a survey regarding their perception of the value of MyeFolio.com for job-seeking, ease of use, and overall satisfaction with the product. We're currently finding that job seekers are not taking advantage of the product's full functionality, and only developing an introductory page on their folios. This may be due to the fact that they don't receive in-depth instruction such as that provided to higher ed students. We are researching the situation now.

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We reviewed the RUReadyND.com K-12 electronic portfolio product as a potential alternative to MyeFolio.com, since it has been implemented in many North Dakota schools. While RUReadyND can be made available to users of all ages, it is not currently designed to let the user provide limited viewing access. In other words, if I were to give an employer access to my RUReadyND account, he would see everything within my records, not just the job-related information. We are researching compatibility for potential user transition and transfer of records from RUReadyND to MyeFolioND.

It is my plan to submit a written report to the Budget Section this November, which will include samples of statistical data pulled from user records, user and employer feedback on value and ease of use, desired features, development needs, and recommendations going forward.

To date, we have spent approximately $65,000 of our plan budget. $140,000 of the $150,000 allocation has been committed for the project.

A statewide portfolio implementation would likely require issuance of a request for proposals (RFP). However, I have discussed potential costs of a statewide system with Eric Johnson of Avenet, which resulted in an estimate of $1.5 million for the next biennium. This consists of two general cost areas:

- Ongoing costs for open access to North Dakotans and individuals seeking work in North Dakota (licensure, software maintenance and upgrade, technical assistance, etc) at approximately $1 million ($500,000 per year).
- Initial development costs necessary to meet the needs of employers and economic developers, and integration costs for efficiency in higher education is estimated at approximately $500,000.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, this concludes my testimony. I'll be happy to answer any questions.